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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 02 THE HAGUE 002188

SIPDIS

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [OPDC](#) [MOPS](#) [MARR](#) [IZ](#) [NL](#)

SUBJECT: NETHERLANDS/IRAQ: MAINTAINING MULTINATIONAL FORCES IN IRAQ

REF: A. STATE 185525

[B](#). THE HAGUE 2154

[C](#). THE HAGUE 2055

[D](#). THE HAGUE 1566

Classified By: CLASSIFIED BY CHARGE DANIEL R. RUSSEL FOR REASONS 1.4 (B AND D)

[1](#)1. (S) Summary: PolCouns and PolMilOff delivered ref A points to Dutch MFA Security Policy Director Maurits Jochems and MOD General Policy Director Lo Casteleijn in separate meetings on August 31. While the current Dutch deployment in Iraq is scheduled to run through March 15, 2005, the GONL is not currently planning to extend it. According to both Jochems and Casteleijn, the August 14 killing of a Dutch MP in an ambush in Rumaythah seriously disturbed Defense Minister Kamp. They claimed the local population, with whom the Dutch have taken pains to develop good relations, had advance knowledge of the attack yet did not warn them. Both local British and Japanese colleagues have received similar messages from these interlocutors. While Kamp has publicly stated that the current Dutch deployment would not be renewed after March (ref B), Jochems felt that the door was not completely closed on a possible Dutch presence after that date. Casteleijn also allowed that Kamp had not "absolutely" ruled out a further extension, but cautioned that a U.S. push at this point would not be productive. PolCouns urged both not to lock the GONL into an exact date of departure as it would only play into hands of those seeking to take advantage of the situation. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (S) PolCouns and PolMilOff discussed ref A points with MFA Security Policy Director Maurits Jochems and MOD General Policy Director Lo Casteleijn in separate meetings on August [3](#)1. Jochems said Defense Minister Kamp had reacted strongly to the killing of a Dutch military police sergeant on August 14 in an ambush in Rumaythah (ref C). Apparently Kamp believed that the local population had had advance knowledge of the attack but did not warn the Dutch. According to Jochems, Kamp had taken this as a personal affront, given Dutch efforts to build good relations with the locals, and this had been reflected in his public comments. Jochems stressed that Kamp's statement that the Dutch deployment would not be extended past next March did not reflect a considered government position and, in his estimation, had not received significant press coverage. He expressed hope that Ministers would not make any further such statements. Concerning the current security situation, the Dutch Polad in Al Muthanna had told him that the recent agreement in Najaf had helped "enormously" with local tensions, given the mainly Shi'a population of the province. Jochems felt it was "too early to tell" whether it would be possible to renew the Dutch deployment beyond March. He said MFA PolDir Siblesz had reminded Kamp in a recent meeting that Dutch personnel were present at the request of the Iraqi Interim Government and the UN; the attitude of the local population toward Dutch troops was not the only (or even most important) factor in determining Dutch actions. Jochems said that even if the main Dutch deployment were to end as scheduled, there might still be continued Dutch involvement depending on the shape of NATO and EU operations at the time.

[1](#)3. (S) MOD General Policy Director Lo Casteleijn stressed that Kamp had been "really offended" by the August 14 incident, as he had believed the Dutch had been successful in establishing an atmosphere of "mutual trust" with the locals. While the recent agreement in Najaf would hopefully lower tensions, he noted, armed Al Sadr followers might yet disperse and cause further trouble, including for the Dutch. Casteleijn said MOD viewed March 15 as the end date for the Dutch deployment and were planning accordingly. (He warned, however, that a dramatic deterioration of the situation would create pressure for an even earlier departure.) Casteleijn stressed that the original Dutch plan (prior to the August 14 attack) had been to transfer primary responsibility for security in the area to Iraqi authorities in January; the Dutch "exit strategy" now assumed that a follow-on, non-Dutch MNF presence would need to be in Al Muthanna after March. He thought it might be possible the UK or another nation would be prepared to replace the Dutch in this role, and said the Dutch would coordinate with the UK on a force generation event this fall. Casteleijn allowed that a continued Dutch presence in Iraq might be possible through an expanded NATO mission or other "new" configuration of forces. He stressed, however, that any effort to put pressure on Kamp at this time

to continue the Dutch deployment in Iraq would be counter-productive. PolCouns urged Casteleijn against locking the GONL into a specific date for departure as that would only play into the hands of those who are seeking to exploit the situation. Casteleijn agreed to take the message to Kamp and observed that Kamp had not used words like "absolute" in ruling out a possible further Dutch extension in his public statements.

14. (S) Comment: The Dutch are currently committed to remain in Iraq through the upcoming elections, a position FM Bot publicly reiterated during his August 29 visit to Baghdad. While a premature Dutch pullout is possible, it is highly unlikely absent a dramatic deterioration in the security situation (the legacy of the 1995 debacle in Srebrenica is always in the back of Dutch minds). It is clear, that the August 14 ambush has clearly rattled Kamp. Local British and Japanese colleagues received similar impressions from these same interlocutors in recent days. In view of Casteleijn's explicit caution, it would be unproductive to push Kamp too hard right now on an extension past March until tempers cool. When the current deployment was renewed for eight months last June, GONL Ministers did not explicitly rule out an extension past March 2005 under "exceptional circumstances" (ref D). The recent ambush has made such a renewal considerably more difficult but not impossible, especially if tensions in southern Iraq lessen. A "new" Dutch deployment as part of an expanded NATO or other international presence is also a distinct possibility we should explore at the proper time. In renewing their current deployment back in June, the Dutch were keenly sensitive to requests from the Iraqi Interim Government and the UN. Such requests would be critical to any further extensions. End Comment.
RUSSEL